

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H.R. 1315
OFFERED BY Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN OF SOUTH
DAKOTA**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans’ Benefits Im-
3 provement Act of 2007”.

**4 SEC. 2. PROVISION OF SPECIALLY ADAPTIVE HOUSING AS-
5 SISTANCE TO DISABLED MEMBERS OF THE
6 ARMED FORCES RESIDING TEMPORARILY IN
7 HOUSING OWNED BY A FAMILY MEMBER.**

8 Section 2102A of title 38, United States Code, is
9 amended—

10 (1) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as
11 subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

12 (2) by inserting after subsection (c) the fol-
13 lowing new subsection (d):

14 “(c) ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED
15 FORCES.—The Secretary may provide assistance under
16 subsection (a) to a member of the Armed Forces serving
17 on active duty who is suffering from a disability described

1 in subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) of section 2101 of this title
2 if such disability is the result of an injury incurred or dis-
3 ease contracted in or aggravated in line of duty in the
4 active military, naval, or air service. Such assistance shall
5 be provided to the same extent as assistance is provided
6 under subsection (a) to veterans eligible for assistance
7 under that subsection and subject to the limitation under
8 subsection (e).”.

9 **SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF MORTGAGE FORE-**
10 **CLOSURE PROTECTION UNDER**
11 **SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT.**

12 (a) **EXTENSION TO 6 MONTHS.**—Subsection (c) of
13 section 303 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50
14 U.S.C. App. 533(c)) is amended by striking “90 days”
15 and inserting “180 days”.

16 (b) **EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF INTEREST RATE LIM-**
17 **ITATION.**—Such section is further amended by adding at
18 the end the following new subsection:

19 “(e) **APPLICABILITY OF INTEREST RATE LIMITA-**
20 **TION.**—Section 207 shall apply with respect to an obliga-
21 tion described in subsection (a) during the 180-day period
22 beginning on the last day of the period of the
23 servicemember’s military service in the same manner that
24 section applies with respect to such an obligation during
25 the period of the servicemember’s military service.”.

1 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
2 subsections (a) and (b) shall apply with respect to any per-
3 son performing a period of military service (as such term
4 is defined in section 101(2) of such Act (50 U.S.C. App.
5 511(2))) that begins on or after the date that is 90 days
6 after the date of the enactment of this Act.

7 **SECTION 4. VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND ORIENTATION AND**
8 **MOBILITY PROFESSIONALS EDUCATION AS-**
9 **SISTANCE PROGRAM.**

10 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—Chapter 76 of
11 title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the
12 end the following new subchapter:

13 “SUBCHAPTER VIII—VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND
14 ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY PROFES-
15 SIONALS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

16 “§ 7691. Authority for program

17 “As part of the Educational Assistance Program and
18 subject to the availability of appropriations for such pur-
19 pose, the Secretary shall carry out a scholarship program
20 under this subchapter. The program shall be known as the
21 Department of Veterans Affairs Visual Impairment and
22 Orientation and Mobility Professionals Scholarship Pro-
23 gram (hereinafter in this subchapter referred to as the
24 ‘Program’). The purpose of the Program is to increase the

1 supply of qualified blind rehabilitation specialists for the
2 Department and the Nation.

3 **“§ 7692. Eligibility; agreement**

4 “(a) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to participate in
5 the Program, an individual must be accepted for enroll-
6 ment or enrolled (as described in section 7602 of this title)
7 as a full-time or part-time student in a field of education
8 or training described in subsection (b).

9 “(b) QUALIFYING FIELDS OF EDUCATION OR TRAIN-
10 ING.—A field of education or training described in this
11 subsection is education or training leading to—

12 “(1) a degree or certificate in visual impairment
13 or orientation and mobility, or a dual degree or cer-
14 tification in both such areas; and

15 “(2) appointment or retention in a position
16 under section 7401 of this title.

17 “(c) AGREEMENT.—(1) An agreement between the
18 Secretary and a participant in the Program shall (in addi-
19 tion to the requirements set forth in section 7604 of this
20 title) include the following:

21 “(A) The Secretary’s agreement to provide the
22 participant with a scholarship under the Program
23 for a specified number (from one to three) of school
24 years during which the participant pursues a course
25 of education or training described in subsection (b)

1 that meets the requirements set forth in section
2 7602(a) of this title.

3 “(B) The participant’s agreement to serve as a
4 full-time employee in the Veterans Health Adminis-
5 tration for a period of three years (hereinafter in
6 this subchapter referred to as the ‘period of obli-
7 gated service’) during the six-year period beginning
8 on the date the participant completes the education
9 or training and receives a degree or certificate de-
10 scribed in subsection (b)(1).

11 “(C) The participant’s agreement to serve
12 under subparagraph (B) in a Department facility se-
13 lected by the Secretary.

14 “(2) In a case in which an extension is granted under
15 section 7673(c)(2) of this title, the number of years for
16 which a scholarship may be provided under the Program
17 shall be the number of school years provided for as a result
18 of the extension.

19 “(3) In the case of a participant who is a part-time
20 student, the period of obligated service shall be reduced
21 in accordance with the proportion that the number of cred-
22 it hours carried by such participant in any such school
23 year bears to the number of credit hours required to be
24 carried by a full-time student in the course of training

1 being pursued by the participant, but in no event to less
2 than one year.

3 **“§ 7693. Scholarship**

4 “(a) SCHOLARSHIP.—A scholarship provided to a
5 participant in the Program for a school year shall consist
6 of payment of the tuition (or such portion of the tuition
7 as may be provided under subsection (b)) of the partici-
8 pant for that school year and payment of other reasonable
9 educational expenses (including fees, books, and labora-
10 tory expenses) for that school year.

11 “(b) AMOUNTS.—The total amount of the scholarship
12 payable under subsection (a)—

13 “(1) in the case of a participant in the Program
14 who is a full-time student, may not exceed \$15,000
15 for the equivalent of one year of full-time
16 coursework; and

17 “(2) in the case of a participant in the Program
18 who is a part-time student, shall bear the same ratio
19 to the amount that would be paid under paragraph
20 (1) if the participant were a full-time student in the
21 course of education or training being pursued by the
22 participant as the coursework carried by the partici-
23 pant to full-time coursework in that course of edu-
24 cation or training.

1 “(c) LIMITATIONS ON PERIOD OF PAYMENT.—(1)

2 The maximum number of school years for which a scholar-
3 ship may be paid under subsection (a) to a participant
4 in the Program shall be six school years.

5 “(2) A participant in the Program may not receive
6 a scholarship under subsection (a) for more than the
7 equivalent of three years of full-time coursework.

8 “(d) PAYMENT OF EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES BY
9 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.—The Secretary may ar-
10 range with an educational institution in which a partici-
11 pant in the Program is enrolled for the payment of the
12 educational expenses described in subsection (a). Such
13 payments may be made without regard to subsections (a)
14 and (b) of section 3324 of title 31.

15 “(e) FULL-TIME COURSEWORK.—For purposes of
16 this section, full-time coursework shall consist of the fol-
17 lowing:

18 “(1) In the case of undergraduate coursework,
19 30 semester hours per undergraduate school year.

20 “(2) In the case of graduate coursework, 18 se-
21 mester hours per graduate school year.

22 **“§ 7694. Obligated service**

23 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Each participant in the Program
24 shall provide service as a full-time employee of the Depart-
25 ment for the period of obligated service provided in the

1 agreement of the participant entered into under section
2 7604 of this title. Such service shall be provided in the
3 full-time clinical practice of such participant's profession
4 or in another health-care position in an assignment or lo-
5 cation determined by the Secretary.

6 “(b) DETERMINATION OF SERVICE COMMENCEMENT
7 DATE.—(1) Not later than 60 days before a participant's
8 service commencement date, the Secretary shall notify the
9 participant of that service commencement date. That date
10 is the date for the beginning of the participant's period
11 of obligated service.

12 “(2) As soon as possible after a participant's service
13 commencement date, the Secretary shall—

14 “(A) in the case of a participant who is not a
15 full-time employee in the Veterans Health Adminis-
16 tration, appoint the participant as such an employee;
17 and

18 “(B) in the case of a participant who is an em-
19 ployee in the Veterans Health Administration but is
20 not serving in a position for which the participant's
21 course of education or training prepared the partici-
22 pant, assign the participant to such a position.

23 “(3)(A) In the case of a participant receiving a de-
24 gree from a school of medicine, osteopathy, dentistry, op-
25 tometry, or podiatry, the participant's service commence-

1 ment date is the date upon which the participant becomes
2 licensed to practice medicine, osteopathy, dentistry, op-
3 tometry, or podiatry, as the case may be, in a State.

4 “(B) In the case of a participant receiving a degree
5 from a school of nursing, the participant’s service com-
6 mencement date is the later of—

7 “(i) the participant’s course completion date; or

8 “(ii) the date upon which the participant be-
9 comes licensed as a registered nurse in a State.

10 “(C) In the case of a participant not covered by sub-
11 paragraph (A) or (B), the participant’s service commence-
12 ment date is the later of—

13 “(i) the participant’s course completion date; or

14 “(ii) the date the participant meets any applica-
15 ble licensure or certification requirements.

16 “(4) The Secretary shall by regulation prescribe the
17 service commencement date for participants who were
18 part-time students. Such regulations shall prescribe terms
19 as similar as practicable to the terms set forth in para-
20 graph (3). (c)

21 “(c) COMMENCEMENT OF OBLIGATED SERVICE.—(1)
22 Except as provided in paragraph (2), a participant in the
23 Program shall be considered to have begun serving the
24 participant’s period of obligated service—

1 “(A) on the date, after the participant’s course
2 completion date, on which the participant (in accord-
3 ance with subsection (b)) is appointed as a full-time
4 employee in the Veterans Health Administration; or

5 “(B) if the participant is a full-time employee
6 in the Veterans Health Administration on such
7 course completion date, on the date thereafter on
8 which the participant is assigned to a position for
9 which the participant’s course of training prepared
10 the participant.

11 “(2) A participant in the Program who on the partici-
12 pant’s course completion date is a full-time employee in
13 the Veterans Health Administration serving in a capacity
14 for which the participant’s course of training prepared the
15 participant shall be considered to have begun serving the
16 participant’s period of obligated service on such course
17 completion date.

18 “(d) COURSE COMPLETION DATE DEFINED.—In this
19 section, the term ‘course completion date’ means the date
20 on which a participant in the Program completes the par-
21 ticipant’s course of education or training under the Pro-
22 gram.

1 **“§ 7695. Repayment for failure to satisfy require-**
2 **ments of agreement**

3 “(a) IN GENERAL.—An individual who receives edu-
4 cational assistance under this subchapter shall repay to
5 the Secretary an amount equal to the unearned portion
6 of such assistance if the individual fails to satisfy the re-
7 quirements of the agreement entered into under section
8 7604 of this title, except in circumstances authorized by
9 the Secretary.

10 “(b) AMOUNT OF REPAYMENT.—The Secretary shall
11 establish, by regulations, procedures for determining the
12 amount of the repayment required under this subsection
13 and the circumstances under which an exception to the
14 required repayment may be granted.

15 “(c) WAIVER OR SUSPENSION OF COMPLIANCE.—
16 The Secretary shall prescribe regulations providing for the
17 waiver or suspension of any obligation of an individual for
18 service or payment under this subchapter (or an agree-
19 ment under this subchapter) whenever noncompliance by
20 the individual is due to circumstances beyond the control
21 of the individual or whenever the Secretary determines
22 that the waiver or suspension of compliance is in the best
23 interest of the United States.

24 “(d) OBLIGATION AS DEBT TO UNITED STATES.—
25 An obligation to repay the Secretary under this section
26 is, for all purposes, a debt owed the United States. A dis-

1 charge in bankruptcy under title 11 does not discharge
2 a person from such debt if the discharge order is entered
3 less than five years after the date of the termination of
4 the agreement or contract on which the debt is based.”.

5 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The tables of sections
6 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting
7 after the items relating to subchapter VII the following
8 new items:

“SUBCHAPTER VIII—VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY
PROFESSIONALS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

“7691. Authority for program.

“7692. Eligibility; agreement.

“7693. Scholarship.

“7694. Obligated service.

“7695. Repayment for failure to satisfy requirements of agreement.”.

9 (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Such chapter is
10 further amended—

11 (1) in section 7601(a)—

12 (A) in paragraph (4), by striking “and” at
13 the end;

14 (B) in paragraph (5), by striking the pe-
15 riod and inserting “; and”; and

16 (C) by adding at the end the following new
17 paragraph:

18 “(6) the Visual Impairment and Orientation
19 and Mobility Professionals Scholarship Program pro-
20 vided for in subchapter VIII of this chapter.”;

21 (2) in section 7602—

22 (A) in subsection (a)(1)—

1 (i) by striking “or VI” and inserting
2 “VI, or VIII”; and

3 (ii) by striking “or for which a schol-
4 arship may be awarded under subchapter
5 VI of this chapter” and inserting “for
6 which a scholarship may be awarded under
7 subchapter VI of this chapter, or for which
8 a scholarship may be awarded under sub-
9 chapter VIII of this chapter”; and

10 (B) in subsection (b), by striking “or VI”
11 and inserting “VI, or VIII”;

12 (3) in section 7603(a)(1), by striking “or VI”
13 and inserting “VI, or VIII”; and

14 (4) in section 7604, by striking “or VI” each
15 place it appears and inserting “VI, or VIII”.

16 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The Secretary of Veterans
17 Affairs shall implement subchapter VIII of chapter 76 of
18 title 38, United States Code, as added by section 1, not
19 later than six months after the date of the enactment of
20 this Act.

21 **SEC. 5. VETERANS’ REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS REPORT IM-**
22 **PROVEMENT.**

23 (a) ADDITIONAL REPORT REQUIREMENTS.—Section
24 4332 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

1 (1) by striking “The Secretary shall” and in-
2 serting “(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—The Secretary
3 shall”;

4 (2) by redesignating paragraphs (4) through
5 (6) as paragraphs (5) through (7), respectively, and
6 inserting after paragraph (3) the following new
7 paragraph (4):

8 “(4) The number of cases reviewed by the Sec-
9 retary of Defense under the National Committee for
10 Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve of the
11 Department of Defense during the fiscal year for
12 which the report is made.”.

13 (3) in paragraph (5), as so redesignated, by
14 striking “or (3)” and inserting “(3), or (4)”;

15 (4) by redesignating paragraph (7), as so redesi-
16 gnated, as paragraph (8), and inserting after para-
17 graph (6) the following new paragraph (7):

18 “(7) An indication of which of the cases re-
19 ported on pursuant to paragraphs (1), (2), (3), and
20 (4) are disability-related.”.

21 (5) by adding at the end the following new sub-
22 sections:

23 “(b) UNIFORM CATEGORIZATION OF DATA.—The
24 Secretary shall coordinate with the Secretary of Defense,
25 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Attorney General,

1 and the Special Counsel to ensure that the information
2 required to be submitted as part of the report under sub-
3 section (a) is categorized in a uniform way.

4 “(c) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary
5 shall provide the information contained in the report re-
6 quired under subsection (a) to the Secretary of Defense,
7 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Attorney General,
8 and the Special Counsel.”.

9 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
10 this section shall apply with respect to a report submitted
11 after the date of the enactment of this Act.

12 **SEC. 6. INCREASE IN NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF ADVISORY**
13 **COMMITTEE ON VETERANS EMPLOYMENT,**
14 **TRAINING, AND EMPLOYER OUTREACH.**

15 Section 4110(c)(1) of title 38, United States Code,
16 is amended by striking “15” and inserting “16”.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to amend title
38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in
the benefits provided to veterans under laws administered
by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other pur-
poses.”.